1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

Introduction

IN September, 1948, I was appointed to undertake anthropological research in Sarawak under the auspices of the Colonial Social Science Research Council. The Secretary of the Colonial Social Science Research Council laid down as follows the nature of my research work: "a study of a traditionally based, stable, Iban community based on shifting dry rice cultivation and not subject to undue land shortage . . . . as described in 'A Report on the Possibilities of a Social Economic Survey of Sarawak,' by Dr. E. R. Leach".[1]

I arrived in Sarawak in January, 1949, and remained in the Colony until June, 1951. For most of this period I was working among the Iban of the Baleh region of the Kapit District of the Third Division. Our base camp was at Rumah Nyala in Sungai Sut, but field research was carried on in many other parts of the Baleh region—particularly in the headwaters of the Mujong. Visits were also made to Iban communities of the lower, middle and upper Rejang, the Katibas and Ngemah (in the Third Division), and of the Saribas and Ulu Batang Ai (in the Second Division). In studying agriculture many months were spent living on Iban farms, and this report is based on intensive first-hand observation; all of my investigations were carried on in the Iban language.

The Iban (or Sea Dayaks) belong to an ethnic stock which Haddon has called Proto-Malay. In brief, they are a brachycephalic people (average C. I. 83) of short stature (average height 5ft. 2½ins.), with black, lank hair and cinnamon coloured skin. Iban culture is basically proto-Malayan in type. Howell, our greatest authority on the Iban language, had no hesitation in classing it as "a dialect of the wide spreading Malay language." However, it is a dialect which has become intermixed with words borrowed from the various Borneo tribes with which the Iban have come into contact. Again, the Iban language, although it does contain a number of words that are Sanskrit in origin, has not been influenced by Arabic as have the languages of the peninsular Malays and the Menangkabau of Sumatra.

In Sarawak to-day, the Iban are the predominant element in a highly heterogeneous population. The total population of Sarawak as disclosed by the census of 1947 was 546,385, and of this number 190,326 (or 34·8%) were Iban. The past century has been for the Iban an era of expansion and they are now scattered over most of the interior zone of Sarawak—from the Samarahan river in the First Division to the Limbang river in the Fifth Division, about four hundred miles away to the north-east. However, the main concentrations of Iban population are to be found in the Second and Third Divisions.

Formerly, all of the Iban of Sarawak were shifting cultivators growing their *padi* on hillside clearings in the tropical rain-forest. To-day, there are a number of Iban communities (particularly in the lower reaches of the Lupar, Saribas and Rejang rivers) who derive their livelihood from the cultivation of wet *padi* in

[1]Leach, E. R., "Social Science Research in Sarawak," Colonial Research Studies No. 1, London, 1950.

2: Howell M-5 (ca. 1908) 1908-1910
OC6 Iban OC6

173 If the Dyak account of their migration could be relied upon, it still gives us no help to trace them beyond the island of Borneo. They unanimously affirm that their forefathers removed here (*i. e.* the lower part and mouth of the Batang Lupar) from the very source of the Batang Lupar or main river. Let it be assumed as probable that their migration, which possibly took place about four or five centuries ago, began from the Dutch part of Borneo.

101 The Sea Dyaks consist of several tribes, and which are the following, *viz*:—Batang Rajang, Ulu
• 197 Ai, Saribas, Sebuyan, Balau, Batang Ai, Undup, Skrang, Lemanak, Kumpang, Engkerbang, Kanowit, Katibas. If these tribes are subdivided again, they will number five times as many. Although they are divided into various tribes, yet they speak only one language, and this is the Malayan language. It is a significant fact that the Malayan language is the mother language of various tribes of people. Each tribe adopts its own idioms and pronunciations, and adds foreign words to its language to enrich it. Anyone who is not thoroughly conversant with the Malay and the Sea Dyak languages would find it difficult to detect their identity. The differences of tones and pronunciation to which each tribe has habituated itself would at first not be noticed by a stranger who would find it impossible to distinguish the language of one tribe from another.

192 The Sea Dyak language is similar to other languages which have grown rich in their vocabularies as

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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tened on the outside, being closed when they are at their farms by the mortar in which their rice is cleaned, and which always stands outside the door in the verandah, or some other heavy piece of wood being merely placed against it. The whole of their buildings, though of so substantial and good appearance, are formed and fastened together without the assistance of nails, their place being supplied by rattans and other cordage.

The language of the sea Dyaks, though altogether different in such parts as having not been adopted from the Malay, is merely a less refined dialect of the language spoken over all Polynesia, and its connexion with that of the other wild tribes, particularly those of Sumatra, is easily to be traced. It is not nearly so melodious in sound, or so copious in its extent, as the Malay, though the Dyaks do not scruple to extend it by adding foreign words whenever they find it necessary, so that a great portion of the words of their vocabulary are from the Malay: the intercourse, which has been generally friendly, between the two nations has also encouraged this adoption of foreign terms. Specimens of their language are given in the work of Captain Keppel, from the vocabularies of Mr. Brooke, and as I can vouch for their correctness, it is not necessary to repeat them here. The different tribes into which the sea division of the Dyaks is again separated have each dialects, which differ in a trifling measure from that generally spoken, but as far as I

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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197 619 have been able to learn, not nearly so much so as amongst the land Dyaks, and never so much but that the tribes belonging to this division, situated most distant from each other, are prevented from the most free communication. This greater similarity of dialect amongst these many villages, than prevails amongst the land tribes, may easily be accounted for, by the greater friendship and intercourse which has subsisted perhaps from the time of their separating from each other: as far as is known, at no period of their history were they ever at war with each other, but were always the foes of the Kyans and land Dyaks in their vicinity; the land tribes, on the contrary, appear always to have been at war with all the tribes in their neighbourhood, which, though perhaps they did not cause the yearly average of a single death, effectually prevented all friendly communication.

771 The religious observances of these people are very little known, but in their state of civilization it cannot be supposed to extend beyond a few superstitions and belief in spirits of woods and mountains; their [177] chief deity is called Batara, a pure Sanscrit term for God, but this appears to be the only relic left them of their former intercourse with the Javan Hindus, who seem never to have possessed so much influence over the sea Dyaks as over the land tribes, none of the peculiar Hindu customs of these latter obtaining 756 among them. The doctor and priest of the village, who is termed manang, is a very curious and mys-

6: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1958 OC6 Iban OC6

THE FAMILY SYSTEM OF THE IBAN OF BORNEO

By J. D. FREEMAN

INTRODUCTION

The Iban[1]—with whose family system this essay is concerned—are a people of western Borneo. They are to be found, for the most part, among the remote, jungle-covered ranges of the undeveloped interior zone of Sarawak, and also in certain of the inaccessible headwaters of the great Kapuas river, in what is now Kalimantan or Indonesian Borneo.

In the judgement of A. C. Haddon, the Iban are Oceanic Mongols, and they belong to an ethnic stock which he has termed Proto-Malay (Haddon and Start 1936: 1). In brief, they are a brachycephalic people (average c.i. 83), of short stature (average height of males, 5 ft. 2½ in.), with lank, black hair, cinnamon coloured skins, and typically Mongoloid features.

Iban culture is also fundamentally proto-Malayan in type. In particular, the Iban language has many close affinities with Malay, and Howell, a leading authority, classes Iban as 'a dialect of the wide spreading Malay language'. The Iban language has not, however, been influenced by Arabic; nor have Iban culture and social institutions been appreciably affected by Islam.

In Sarawak today, the Iban are the predominant element in a highly heterogeneous population. The total population of Sarawak as disclosed by the census of 1947 was 546,385, and of this number 190,326 (or 34·8 %) were Iban. Sarawak, like so many of the other countries of south-east Asia, has a plural society. Along the coast, among the deltaic swamps and in the low-lying country bordering the tidal reaches of the rivers, one finds the main centres of Malay, Chinese and Melanau settlement. Further inland, amid steep and tangled ranges drained by swift-flowing streams and rivers, live the indigenous hill peoples: the Land Dayaks, the Iban, the Kayan, the Kenyah, the Kajang and others, all of them with subsistence economies based on the shifting cultivation of dry rice.

In particular, this essay is concerned with the Ulu Ai Iban of the Baleh river of the Third Division of Sarawak. The Baleh enters the great Rejang river, from the west, at a point about 170 river miles from the sea, and along its banks and those of its numerous tributaries (the Sut, Mujong, Gat and Merirai being the most important of them), there are scattered some 133 Iban communities with a total population of about 11,500. Almost all of these

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

302 to the eyes from dust and glare. But my remarks have made little impression on them. Among the Dyaks, as elsewhere, fashions die hard.

197 The Sea Dyak language is practically a dialect of Malay which is spoken more or less over all Polynesia. It is not 192 nearly so copious as other Malayan languages, but the Dyaks do not scruple to use Malay words in their conversation when necessary. The Dyak language is particularly weak in expressing abstract ideas. What the mind cannot grasp the tongue is not likely to express. I believe there is only one word—*rindu*—to express all the different varieties of love. On the other hand, the language is rich in words expressing the common actions of daily life. There are many words to express the different ways of carrying anything; one word for carrying in the hand, another for carrying on the back, and another for carrying on the shoulder.

There are several words in Dyak which resemble Malay words of the same meaning, the difference being that the Malay suffix *an* is changed into *ai*. Thus, the Malay word *makan* (to eat) becomes *makai* in Dyak, and *jalan* (to walk) becomes *jalai*. There are some words exactly the same in both languages, and these are for the most part simple substantives, such as *rumah* (house), *laki* (husband), *bini* (wife). Verbs, however, commonly differ, though expressing simple necessary actions. Thus, the Malay word for "to drink" is *minum*, the Dyak word is *ngirup*; the Malay for "to eat" is *makan*, and the Dyak *empa* as well as *makai*.

It is not surprising that there should be many words in Dyak not known to the Malays. Though derived from the same parent tongue, the Dyak language has developed independently by contact with other races.

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

There are many tribes that talk the Sea Dyak language. The Sabuyaus living on the coast and at Lundu, the Balaus of the Batang Lupar and elsewhere, the dwellers on the Skrang and Saribas Rivers, as well as the Kanowit and Katibas branches of the Rejang River, all speak it with slight modifications. There can be no doubt that all these tribes are descended from the same parent stock.

The difference of dialect between the different tribes is often a source of great amusement, and I remember well taking some Saribas boys, who had been some time in my school at Banting, on a visit to their people. We sat in the long veranda of the Dyak house, and I noticed that as they spoke to their relatives and friends there were shrieks of laughter and great merriment. The reason of this was that the boys had unconsciously picked up the Balau dialect during their stay at Banting, and their manner of speaking amused their Saribas friends exceedingly.

14: Howell M-5 (ca. 1900) 1900 OC6 Iban OC6

PREFACE.

197 THE language of the so-called Sea Dyaks of Sarawak is a dialect of the wide spreading Malay language intermixed with words borrowed from Kayan and, it is surmised, other primitive Bornean races with whom the Dyaks have come in contact.

197 619 It cannot yet be said that the language is that of a Nation. It is the language of a number of tribes who may be conveniently grouped as follows :—

1 {Balau. {Undup.	2 {Saribas. {Skarang.	3 {Batang Ai. {Lemanak.
4 {Sabuyau {Bugau.	5 {Ulu Ai. {Engkair.	[see *Daya*].

These different tribes are, with the exception of the Saribas and Bugau, inhabitants of the Batang Lupar River and its tributaries, and from these tributaries they mostly derive their tribal names such as Sabuyau, Lemanak, Skarang, Undup. It is however necessary to state that in recent years some of these tribes have so increased and spread beyond their ancient limits that there are now said to be as many, if not more, Dyaks living in the Rejang river than in the whole Second Division (a tract of land which with the Batang Lupar includes the Saribas and Kalaka rivers and the area drained by these three rivers).

Each of these tribes has some peculiarities of dialect, and some make use of words quite unknown to other tribes, but we doubt if these peculiarities are as striking as the difference between the speech of a man from Yorkshire and one from Sussex.

192 177 619 The Balau Dyaks, who derive their tribal name from a ridge of low hills about twenty-five miles up the Batang Lupar river, have adopted many words in common use by the Malays and this is not to be wondered at when we call to mind that about half a century ago large numbers of this tribe were gathered together and lived with many Malays upon Banting Hill for the sake of mutual protection against a common foe (Saribas and Skarang Dyaks), and that they have always lived in close proximity to Malays, and further that a large portion of the regular force (the Sarawak Rangers) has been and is still recruited from them. This fact has also no doubt, in some measure, given an additional impulse to their "knowledge" of Malay. The Undup Dyaks, who have always been allied with the Balau tribe in their tribal wars, and who have frequently intermarried with them, certainly possess less knowledge

14: Howell M-5 (ca. 1900) 1900 OC6 Iban OC6

192 of Malay and use fewer Malay words, but there is an increasing
177 tendency with them to pick up any Malay words they happen
619 to hear used, when in the Rangers or in the courts, and adopt them.

The Saribas and Skarang Dyaks, the keenest hunters after jungle produce (gutta, rotan, etc.) are better off than any other Dyaks and travel long distances, even to the Celebes, in quest of old jars, yet, in spite of their strong trading instincts and their smartness they do not make use of Malay words, when speaking their own tongue, to so great an extent as the two previously mentioned tribes, the reason being perchance, that they, or at all events the Saribas, have always been the dominant race in their river and as such have learnt to look down somewhat upon the Malays.

191 The Sabuyau and Bugau Dyaks can mostly speak Malay; the
619 latter who inhabit the country beyond the Kalingkang range in
177 Netherlands India territory are said to speak it fluently, the reason probably being that they are frequently visited by Kapuas Malay peddlers. The Sabuyau are a dwindling race. Scarcely a dozen families remain in their old home in the Sabuyau river, at the mouth of the Batang Lupar, but the majority live at Lundu where doubtless the purity of their language has suffered much through their close intimacy with their Malay neighbours.

619 The Ulu Batang Ai or Ulu Ai Dyaks, who live further up the
● 197 Batang Lupar river than any other people, probably speak the purest
177 dialect of the Sea Dyak language, but their accent is harsh and their speech rough sounding and unpleasant compared with that of those who live nearer the sea. From their position they have naturally had little intercourse with Malays until more recent years, and their knowledge of Malay is practically *nil*.

197 The importance of the Sea Dyak language in Sarawak cannot be over-estimated.

It is the language of one of the most numerous races in the country—a race which is increasing and spreading further and further year by year. It is the language of the most energetic and go-ahead of all the native races in the Island of Borneo, and it is a living and growing language.

Throughout the Batang Lupar, Saribas, Kalaka, and Rejang rivers and their tributaries it is par excellence the *trade* language. Nearly all Chinese living in these rivers speak or understand it; indeed if they understand a little Malay, they usually prefer to talk Dyak, for it comes easier and more natural to them to do so, as many are married to Dyak women. The language is familiar to all Malays who live in or near Dyak countries or who *go inland* (*mudik ka Daya*), and even if they are strangers they find they can rapidly acquire a knowledge of this language which is in so many respects similar to their own. Wherever there is a government station of any importance it is garrisoned usually by Rangers and this language there is in daily use.

14: Howell M-5 (ca. 1900) 1900 OC6 Iban OC6

Further, we should not omit to notice the growing importance of the language in the country further north, beyond H. H. The Rajah's territory. 197

The British North Borneo Company employs a number of Sea Dyaks as armed police. There are many engaged in seeking jungle produce, in petty trading, or in cooley work, and, year by year, there would appear to be a steady increase in the number of Sea Dyaks who seek their fortunes in the Company's territory. 167

The Sea Dyaks possess no knowledge of writing, so their language has necessarily existed as an oral language. 212

When we reflect that Europeans have been in the country for upwards of fifty years, we may well feel surprised that so little has been done to familiarise both the natives and ourselves with this language by means of writing and printed books. 114

Previous to this Dictionary there has been produced only one work of the sort, entitled "A Brief Dictionary of the Sea Dyak Language." The other printed works can be counted almost upon the fingers of one hand, and their value is, in our opinion, much discounted by the fact that they clothe foreign ideas, thoughts, customs, and speech with mere Dyak words (of course used grammatically), which renders them useful only to Dyaks who have first of all been educated up to them, and of little use to those Europeans employed in this country who desire to construct genuine Dyak sentences understood by the common people. In this work it will be noticed that we have very generally erred upon the other side, and, at the expense of the English language, have tried to express in our examples native ideas, thoughts, customs and speech.

For their valuable assistance so kindly given us in preparing this work for publication, we have to thank Jantong of Temelan (who probably possesses a greater knowledge of the peculiarities of the language than any other Dyak living), Mr. A. F. Cheyne of Kalaka, the Rev'd E. H. Gomes, B. A., of Banting (whose criticisms and suggestions proved to be of the greatest possible use) and the Right Reverend G. F. Hose, D. D., Bishop of Singapore and Sarawak. 000

D. J. S. BAILEY.
W. HOWELL.

Simanggang, 1900.